

CDC/UNC PUBLIC HEALTH GRAND ROUNDS
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PUBLIC HEALTH GRAND ROUNDS
MAY 11, 2007

“A healthy community is a place where people provide leadership in assessing their own resources and needs, where public health and social infrastructure and policies support health, and where essential public health services, including quality health care, are available...Inadequate and dangerous physical environments in homes, schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces and risk factors such as air and water pollution, unsafe food, social isolation, high rates of unemployment, violence, and crime constitute some of the problems experienced by communities.”

*The Future of the Public's Health in the 21st Century (2002),
National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine (IOM)*

Community involvement and multi-sector collaborations are becoming the cornerstones of public health action. Many programs and offices across CDC/ATSDR are at the forefront of the efforts to broaden understanding and use of key community engagement principles, and have developed valuable resources and to guide community engagement and mobilization activities including:

- CDC Principles of Community Engagement – <http://www.cdc.gov/phppo/pce/>
- Healthy People in Healthy Communities: A Community Planning Guide – <http://www.healthypeople.gov/publications/healthycommunities2001/healthycom01.hk.pdf>
- Healthy Communities: New Partnerships for the Future of Public Health – http://books.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=5475

CDC Health Protection Goals

<http://www.cdc.gov/about/goals.htm>

Healthy Places Goal

The places where people live, work, learn, and play will protect and promote their health and safety, especially those at greater risk of health disparities.

Healthy Communities Goal

Increase the number of communities that protect, and promote health and safety and prevent illness and injury in all their members.

Healthy Travel & Recreation Goal

Ensure that environments enhance health and prevent illness and injury during travel and recreation.

Healthy Homes Goal

Protect and promote health through safe and healthy home environments.

CDC and its partners have also developed cross-cutting programs and specific tools from diverse health areas, such as environmental health, chronic disease prevention and minority health including:

- Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence (PACE-EH) – <http://pace.naccho.org/>
- Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) – <http://www.cdc.gov/reach>
- Planned Approach to Community Health (PATCH) – <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/publications/patch/index.htm>
- Mobilizing for Action through Planning & Partnerships (MAPP) – <http://mapp.naccho.org>
- Assessment Protocol for Excellence in Public Health (APEX/PH) – <http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/APEXPH.cfm>
- HHS/CDC Steps to a HealthierUS (Steps) – <http://www.cdc.gov/steps>
- Health Impact Assessment – <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm>

During the past two decades, researchers have provided ample evidence that supports the important contributions of both the physical and social environments toward health promotion and protection. For example, the use of community collaborations and built environment interventions to prevent violence – rather than relying solely on health education or law enforcement approaches – is gaining widespread acceptance. The West Wabasso case study illustrates the importance and the effectiveness of engaging the community in health decision-making to address the broad array of the determinants of health.

Case Study: West Wabasso, Florida

West Wabasso is a small, low-income, minority community in Indian River County in central Florida. Promises had been made to the community over the past 50 years that were not met. The community residents had lost faith and trust in their local government, and did not feel like they had a voice in their future. As development occurred around them, they felt ignored by the lack of involvement from government agencies.

In 2000 West Wabasso had:

- Approximately 115 residents, 86% of which were black
- Median household income of \$6,250, compared to \$51,162 countywide
- More than 56% of community residents below poverty level
- Less than 60% of the resident's with a high school diploma
- Median home value of \$29,400 vs. \$193,500 countywide
- Almost twice the national average of residents over 65 years of age (20% vs. 12.4% nationally)
- More than twice the national average of persons with a disability (44% vs. 19.3 nationally)
- Shallow groundwater wells with iron levels 10 times the limit set forth in State & Federal Regulations.
- Community septic systems experiencing a 70% failure rate
- No street lights and no paved access to many elderly and disabled residents' homes.
- Approximately 80 dilapidated homes in project area.

West Wabasso's Community Health Outcomes

- Installation of initial streetlights and sidewalks completed.
- Installation of walking trail and fitness equipment in Wabasso Park.
- Creation of a community fit club, called "PACE setters" who utilize the new sidewalks, walking trail, and park.
- Refurbishing of the community center in West Wabasso.
- Potable water has been installed throughout the community
- New bus route created and is now the most frequently traveled of all routes in the county.
- Two park pavilion projects have been constructed in the Wabasso Park as requested by the community.
- The PACE-EH team has helped to develop a coalition of local volunteers called *Project Hope*, to build homes for disadvantaged residents whose housing needs to be demolished for reasons of safety.
- Trust between the community and the county health department has been restored – rather than viewing the health department as ignoring the community (the first community meeting consisted of residents shouting complaints at officials), they now look to it for help resolving their issues.
- The positive media coverage, rapid action planning and immediate impacts is partly the result of, and continues to inspire, broad and committed intra-agency collaboration.

13 Steps of the PACE Process

1. Determine community capacity to conduct the assessment
2. Define and characterize the community
3. Assemble community health assessment team
4. Defining the goals of the assessment
5. Generating the health issue list
6. Analyzing issues with a Systems Framework
7. Developing appropriate community health indicators
8. Selecting standards
9. Creating health issue profiles
10. Ranking the health issues
11. Setting priorities for action
12. Developing the action plan
13. Evaluating progress & future planning

To its credit, the Florida Department of Health is the only state agency in the nation that has supported the community-based Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE-EH) process so broadly (in 30 communities, including Indian River.) Florida's Division of Environmental Health offered small grants to institute pilot PACE projects. Indian River County Health Department (IRCHD) was one of the county programs that received \$30,000 pilot the PACE process.

Specific objectives of PACE included:

- Allow communities to express and define their environmental health issues themselves
- Understand the relationship between the built environment and public health
- Establish relationships with land use planners and other non-traditional public health partners
- View environmental health more holistically rather than just categorically/programmatically
- Build trust between the health dept. and the community, improving effectiveness of existing/future efforts
- Address outstanding environmental health issues not captured at the program level
- Further integrate environmental public health (prevention programs) with health dept. clinical programs
- Empower a community to action beyond the life of the project.

Through the PACE process, the community identified their top “health” issues: lack of safe/healthy housing, community safety from violence (drug trafficking), street lighting, accessible areas for safe physical activity and recreation, access to safe drinking water, and septic failures/lack of access to a municipal wastewater system.

With an initial \$30,000 public health grant, West Wabasso’s community collaboration leveraged an estimated at \$1.5 million to date, including:

- Connecting homes to county water: \$825,000
- Pavilions for West Wabasso Park: \$81,750
- Walking trail and exercise equipment: \$10,000
- Sidewalk installations: \$43,500
- Streetlight installations: \$7,281
- Wastewater treatment improvements: \$40,000
- *World Changers'* 26 new-roof projects: \$40,000
- Demolition of abandoned homes: \$26,000
- Donated building of Big Momma's house: \$130,000

<p>West Wabasso’s Traditional and Non-traditional Public Health Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director of County Community Development• Director of County Public Works• Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)• County Parks & Recreation staff• Sheriff and Deputies of Indian River County• Local NAACP chapter staff• State legislators and staff• County Commissioners• West Wabasso Civic Progressive League• Several local builders and developers• Local faith-based community
--

Some of these tangible changes to the physical and social environment of West Wabasso have been critical to the success of some traditional public health interventions such as health education and promotion efforts to increase physical activity rates.

Specifically, because of the reductions in drug related violence and pedestrian injury risk made possible by the street lights, sidewalks, walking trails, and new park facilities, a new physical activity promotion effort has begun. The Wabasso *PACE Setters* is a newly formed group that has organized to meet every Saturday and Wednesday to exercise. Because of the “built environment” improvements and the collaborations with local law enforcement officers, residents now feel safer and are utilizing the infrastructure improvements to improve their health.

Other innovative synergies made possible by the comprehensive, integrated, and inclusive nature of the Wabasso PACE process include an agreement with the developer of an adjacent proposed development to connect the community with an extensive park facility. Also, the developer has offered the use of his heavy machinery to demolish abandoned, unsafe houses so that Wabasso community members can increase their communities social capital by redeveloping dilapidated structures. A final example of innovative leveraging of external resources and good will include the decision of another local developer to donate 20 mobile homes to Wabasso residents who needed them and to pledge \$10,000 to deliver them. One of the recipients of these homes was an 81 year old man who had been living in his car for more than 3 years because his house had become uninhabitable. Perhaps the most significant solution to one resident’s housing needs, which resulted from PACE EH in Wabasso, was the donation of a house which was built in one day. Such successes can be attributed to agency cooperation, but also collaboration between local government and private entities.

With the success of the project in communities like Wabasso, more communities and local government officials have begun seeking out the health department for assistance. Project results from across the state of Florida show a strong need to closely examine the way we build, develop, and service our communities and the associated impacts on our public health. Five county health departments have seen the value of the PACE EH process and decided to continue funding the effort locally as a routine business practice, instead of relying on state grant applications. Community assessment processes, like PACE EH, are now required in county health department administrator's job descriptions. At the state level, the Florida Department of Health has drafted a Memorandum of Agreement with two other state agencies to work more cooperatively on growth management issues. This is an especially important issue in Florida which is experiencing a continued surge in health care needs while experiencing unprecedented growth, adding the pressure of 750 people every day to its schools, highways, water supplies, and open space.

“A healthy community is one that embraces the belief that health is more than merely an absence of disease; a healthy community includes those elements that enable people to maintain a high quality of life and productivity.

To begin to achieve the goal of improving health, a community must develop a strategy. That strategy, to be successful, must be supported by many individuals who are working together.... Most communities already have health departments and other governmental agencies that are responsible for public health services. Many communities also have coalitions of key individuals and organizations that have organized to address specific issues, for example, block associations or neighborhood watch groups. A coalition will often, of course, work with the health department and other health organizations in the community. However, it can also help mobilize a wider range of other resources to address health issues.”

Healthy People in Healthy Communities (2001)
U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services